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Walter Reed Bethesda's Blood Donor Center Commemorates Grand Re-Opening

By Sarah E. Marshall
WRNMMC Public Affairs
staff writer

The Armed Services Apheresis/Blood Donor Center at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) celebrated a newly renovated space with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Feb. 26. The upgrade was designed to enhance amenities and enable more blood donations at the center.

To kick off the event, WRNMMC Director Brig. Gen. (Dr.) Jeffrey B. Clark cut a bright yellow ribbon at the entrance to the center. Mary Lewis, an apheresis nurse specialist, and Keith Krueger, design project manager from Facilities, joined the director in cutting the ribbon. Both were cited as instrumental throughout the renovation process. Medical center staff toured the enhanced center, shared cake and conversation as they scheduled appointments for future donations.

The donor center collects blood products such as red blood cells, plasma and platelets, that support both Walter Reed Bethesda as well as Fort Belvoir Community Hospital in Virginia, said Army Lt. Col. Robert K. Pell, chief of WRNMMC's Blood Services. Pell stated Walter Reed Bethesda transfuses approximately 7,000 blood-related products per year at the medical center, in addition to blood quotas that supplement deployed facilities in combat zones.

Pell explained the recent renovations of the donor center offer better lighting, and a more open layout, allowing a more streamlined process for donors. As the donors enter the center to make a donation, they can now pass through the front door and enter the interview area to move onto the collection area. The supply and testing area, in the back of the center, has also been upgraded

with an enhanced heating and cooling system.

"With this recent renovation, almost two years in the making, we're very excited to continue supporting those in need of our services, and to be doing so in a functionally and esthetically improved space," Pell said. "It's a much more efficient space."

Donating blood and platelets continues to be a vital service, he added. The Armed Services Apheresis/Blood Donor Center collects and provides blood products for transfusions in the medical center's operating rooms. These procedures support wounded warriors returning from overseas and supplies clinics and wards, where blood is needed. The blood service also supports three different programs in its teaching mission to provide blood bank training.

Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Robert Bernosky, a surgical technician in the Main Operating Room said, he understands first-hand, the need for blood products at the nation's medical center – and that's one reason why he comes in almost every two weeks to donate platelets.

About two years ago, the corpsman started donating platelets, which have a shorter shelf life, and can be donated more frequently than whole blood, according to Bernosky. At that time, the number of wounded warriors was much higher, and nearly all who were inpatients at the medical center needed platelets, he continued.

"I started doing it for them," he said. Bernosky added that the number of wounded warriors has, thankfully decreased, but there is always a need for blood products.

Another reason he donates, is because internal donations help save the medical center money. "We're able to treat our wounded warriors here with donations we get in-house," Bernosky said.



Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) Director Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Clark, right, cuts the ribbon with Mary Lewis, apheresis nurse specialist, commemorating the grand re-opening of the Blood Donor Center on Feb. 26.



Photos by Sarah E. Marshall

During the grand re-opening of the Blood Donor Center, Mary Lewis, apheresis nurse specialist, shows OR surgical tech Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Robert Bernosky some of the equipment in the newly renovated space. Bernosky is a frequent donor and works in WRNMMC's Main OR.

Pell agreed, expressing his gratitude for all donors at WRNMMC.

"We appreciate the unwavering support from each and every one of our dedicated donors," Pell said. "It's truly a

pleasure to re-open our doors, and we're honored to serve our population of military members, retirees and their families."

The Armed Services Apheresis Donor Center is located

in the Arrowhead Zone, Building 9, first floor, in Room 1671. For more information about the Armed Services Blood Program, visit www.military-donor.dod.mil, or call 301-295-2104.

USU's Corner

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) was created more than 40 years ago to fill a void that existed in hospitals, clinics, on bases, battlefields and other places where service members needed and deserved specially trained physicians to care for their wounds.

Although USU remains true to its original mission, our scope has broadened significantly over time. In addition to the F. Edward Hébert School of Medicine, we now have the Daniel K. Inouye Graduate School of Nursing -- with nationally recognized programs, including a brand new Doctor of Nursing Practice degree. We also have a Postgraduate Dental College that incorporates programs from the Army, Navy and Air Force, with master's programs that reach across many disciplines of oral health. In all of our programs, we emphasize leadership, as evidenced by our ever-growing list of flag and general officer alumni; and those in significant positions within the Military Health System (MHS). For example, we are fortunate to count among our graduates, the new Deputy Surgeon General of the Navy, Rear Adm. Forrest Faison, as well as the Army Medical Department's newest general officer nominee, Col. (Dr.) Bertram Providence, the medical officer for the 1st Medical Brigade at Fort Hood, Texas.

USU has a robust research portfolio to pursue solutions to challenges faced by our men and women in uniform -- from traumatic brain injury to emerging infectious diseases; from radiation injury to psychological health; and from basic mechanisms of cellular injury to new approaches for cancer diagnosis and treatment.

USU's teaching, research and clinical programs are closely integrated with those at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC). For example, Dr.



Vincent Ho serves as both the chair of USU's Department of Radiology and Radiological Sciences, and the Chief of the Radiology Service at WRNMMC. USU also partnered with WRNMMC last year to stand up the John P. Murtha Comprehensive Cancer Center to offer access to cutting-edge cancer diagnostic and treatment technologies. USU provides the Center's essential research

component.

Across the street from USU and WRNMMC is the main campus of the National Institutes of Health. The physical proximity of these three world-class institutions creates a globally-unique academic health center of extraordinary depth, breadth and impact. Individually and collectively, these three organizations are dedicated to advancing health and biomedical discovery to serve our nation and improve the health of world. A perfect example of this outstanding partnership is the Center for Neuroscience and Regenerative Medicine (CNRM). CNRM is the intersection between USU, NIH and WRNMMC's neuroscience and rehabilitation programs, working to improve the quality of life for our wounded service members.

We are also working closely with Rear Adm. Bono to expand educational and clinical opportunities throughout the National Capital Region and the MHS, ultimately providing a high quality integrated health care delivery system.

We are always receptive to new ideas on how USU can further provide value for the MHS. To that end, if you have an idea -- don't keep it to yourself. Please feel free to email your suggestions to me at President@usuhs.edu.

Charles L. Rice, MD
President, Uniformed Services
University of the Health Sciences

Bethesda Notebook

Patient Safety Week

This week is Patient Safety Awareness Week, an annual educational campaign focused on health-care safety. Today from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Building 9, first floor near the escalators, the patient safety staff at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center will observe the campaign with an event providing information on how patients can improve their ability to act as their own health care advocates. There will also be a cake-cutting ceremony at noon. All staff, patients and visitors are invited to attend.

Command Climate Survey Under Way

The Walter Reed Bethesda Command Climate Survey is under way and runs through March 24. The survey is designed to assess staff concerns, morale, job satisfaction and quality of life at the medical center. The confidential and voluntary survey can be completed at any workspace computer via the Internet. All Walter Reed Bethesda staff members are encouraged to participate in the survey. For more information, call Lt. Cmdr. Pandora Liptrot at 301-295-2178.

Daylight Saving Time Begins

Daylight saving time begins 2 a.m. Sunday. Set clocks forward one hour, and refresh batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors.

Walter Reed Bethesda Town Hall

The next Walter Reed Bethesda town hall meetings are scheduled for Tuesday, March 11 at 7 a.m., noon, and 3:30 p.m. in the Memorial Auditorium. All staff members are encouraged to attend one of the meetings.

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March is Red Cross Month

Volunteers Contribute Hours of Service at Walter Reed Bethesda



Photo by Sharon Renee Taylor

Red Cross volunteers retired Army Col. Mike Duggan and Rachel Rankin serve at the welcome desk in the National Intrepid Center of Excellence on Naval Support Activity Bethesda.

By Sharon Renee Taylor
WRNMMC Public Affairs
staff writer

More than 400 Red Cross volunteers contribute approximately 4,000 hours monthly to support patients, family members and care providers in a variety of programs and services at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC). During the summer months, this number increases when youths join the ranks of Red Cross volunteers at the nation's largest military treatment facility.

Each year, the president proclaims March as "Red Cross Month" to honor the Red Cross and its volunteers, a tradition President Franklin D. Roosevelt began in 1943. President Barack Obama delivered his decree on Monday.

"During American Red Cross Month, we honor those who devote themselves to bringing relief where there is suffering, inspiring hope where there is despair and healing the wounds of disaster and war," Obama proclaimed.

According to the Red Cross, the month is used as an opportunity "to honor the everyday heroes who help us fulfill that mission every day,"—heroes in some cases who have dedicated more than 40 years volunteering in support of military medicine — and others, who proved themselves heroes on the battlefields, and still more who lead their four-legged friends with

wagging tails amidst patient wards at WRNMMC.

Four decades of service

Walter Reed Bethesda Director Brig. Gen. (Dr.) Jeffrey B. Clark honored three Red Cross volunteers, who each served more than four decades, during a Dec. 3, 2013 ceremony. He thanked long-time volunteers Lina Czubas, Betty Byrd and Rose Mologne for "who they are, what they do, and most importantly, how they do it."

Clark recognized Mologne for her service with the Red Cross. The wife of the late Maj. Gen. (Dr.) Lewis A. Mologne, who served as a commanding general of the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC), said she's always had strong volunteer ties. "It's just part of my makeup to help people," she said.

Byrd was honored for 44 years with the Red Cross, volunteering since 1969. She briefly reflected on her years of service. "I've seen the changes," she said. "The love is still there."

As a Red Cross volunteer for more than five decades, Czubas, 89, has devoted more than half her life to service members and their families. She began volunteering with the Red Cross at Fort Dix, N.J., in the late 1950s, preparing Soldiers for Vietnam. These days, Czubas can be found at Walter Reed Bethesda assisting in the pharmacy or The Military Advanced Training Center. Czubas explained that during her 58 years with the Red Cross,

she has carried the service members she helps in her heart. "To meet them is to love them: for what they stand for, for what they did," she said.

Helping Heroes

Three days a week, retired Army Col. Michael Duggan and fellow Red Cross volunteer Rachel Rankin serve at the front desk in the National Intrepid Center of Excellence on Naval Support Activity Bethesda. Rankin, a retired school teacher, said she first volunteered as a military spouse with the Red Cross in a Berlin hospital, and

later at Fort Jackson, S.C. Since 2009, she's worked alongside Duggan. "I've enjoyed it," she said, pointing at the Purple Heart pins on Duggan's vest, and urging him to tell his story.

"I'm an [older man]," he said. "Having been in combat and wounded in combat helps the young wounded warriors identify with me." Wounded twice in Vietnam — once during an ambush in 1966, and a second-time during a deployment in 1968 — Duggan said the

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Keeping Service Members, Staff Educated on HIV/AIDS Prevention, Detection

By Sarah E. Marshall
WRNMMC Public Affairs
staff writer

Today more than 1.1 million people in the U.S. are living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) today – roughly 500,000 of whom are in Washington, D.C. Meanwhile, 1 in 6 people are unaware they are infected, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Walter Reed Bethesda's Public Health Department seeks to raise awareness through education and prevention. Most recently, the department set up tables in the medical center to provide information and answer questions about HIV and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), as part of HIV/AIDS Awareness Month, said Bill Sachau, a nurse practitioner in the Public Health Department.

"As far as statistics go, HIV is still a problem," Sachau said. He believes the epidemic, resulting in about 50,000 new diagnoses every year in the U.S., continues because



it's a topic that is generally not discussed.

"There's still a lot of stigma around HIV," he said. "If it's not talked about, that's a good way for a disease to keep getting transmitted."

Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Kristofer Gonzalez shared the same sentiment. Gonzalez, who also works in the Public Health Department, was among those who recently helped hand out information and answer questions during HIV/AIDS Awareness Month. To reduce stigma, he said, "we take the time to inform

people that someone infected with HIV is still a person, and should be treated as such. Even though they are HIV positive, that doesn't mean they can infect you through contact via hand-shaking or simply having a casual conversation."

Gonzalez added it's important to continue to raise awareness because of the "this could never happen to me" mentality many people maintain.

"We take the time to educate people as to which behaviors they engage in that can be

considered high risk, and what they can do to reduce their risk," Gonzalez said.

Sachau explained HIV is often transmitted through unprotected intercourse and intravenous drug use.

Also referred to as a retro virus, Sachau said HIV infects the CD4 cells – a subset of white blood cells. Without treatment, the virus reduces the number of CD4 cells which deplete the immune system. Once an individual's CD4 count drops below 200, it is then classified as AIDS. With an AIDS diagnosis, an individual is at higher risk for rare, more life-threatening infections, he said.

Sachau recalled in his early nursing career nearly 20 years ago, people were passing away from the disease every week. Over the last two decades he said, advancements in treatment have improved, and people succumbing to the disease every week is no longer the case. It's still critical to keep educating the community about the importance of prevention and early detection, he said.

It can take up to six months for the HIV antibody to show positive on a test, Sachau continued; therefore, it's important to get tested frequently, he said. He went on to note for military members, HIV testing is a required every two years – and that's another opportunity to offer education.

"Diagnosing early is paramount. The more often you get tested for HIV, the more likely you will get diagnosed earlier. The earlier you get diagnosed, the greater your success for treatment," Sachau said.

The department also has an open door policy. Anyone looking for information on HIV, or who wants to be tested, can come in if they believe they may have had some risk of exposure, Sachau continued. The department is located on the fifth floor of Building 7.

"Testing is very important as well as reaching people with that education," Sachau said.

For more information, visit www.aidsinfo.nih.gov.



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Navy Officials Advise Sailors to Verify PRIMS Data

From Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

With the semiannual Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA) upcoming, Navy Physical Readiness Program officials remind Sailors to verify their results in the Physical Readiness Information Management System (PRIMS).

"After each PFA, Sailors need to log into PRIMS and ensure their data is entered and accurate," said Bill Moore, director, Navy Physical Readiness Program.

All commands are required to report their PFA data via PRIMS no later than 30 days after conducting the PFA in accordance with guidelines established in the Navy's Physical Readiness Program instruction, OPNAVINST 6110.1J. Each Sailor must have a record for both PFA cycles in the year, even if the record reflects non-participation status due to deployment, individual augmentee, medical waiver, etc.

Once the information is submitted, Sailors need to verify their data within 60 days so that any corrections can be made by the Command Fitness Leader at the command level. After six months of PFA completion, record changes can



Photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Dion Dawson

Naval Support Activity Bethesda command fitness leaders watch closely as Sailors complete the push-up portion of the Navy's semi-annual physical readiness test in 2012.

only be made by PRIMS administrators at Navy Personnel Command, which requires a Letter of Correction from the individual's commanding officer, on letter head, that grants authorization to make the change.

For more information in PRIMS and physical readiness, visit the Navy's physical readiness Web page at www.npc.navy.mil/support/21st_Century_Sailor/physical/Pages/default2.aspx.

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Naval Support Activity Bethesda

By Ryan Hunter
NSAB Public Affairs staff writer

While staff and residents at Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) may have only seen the underside of their desks during last week's training drills, they were still active participants in an exercise that helped to create a safer campus.

From Feb. 17 to 28, NSAB's Installation Training Team in coordination with Uniform Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) and Navy Medicine Professional Development Center, executed the Solid Curtain-Citadel Shield training exercise. The operation, designed to evaluate Naval Security Force (NSF) responses, encompassed numerous tactical drills preceded by defensive training, culminating with an Improvised Explosive Device (IED)/ Active Shooter exercise on Feb. 27.

The purpose of the IED/active shooter drill was twofold: "to test our sentry's ability to identify [potential threats] among base personnel, evaluate our NSF's initial response, strategies and tactics," and "combine it with a shelter in place drill for our tenants - the real world response to any active shooter or major event on the installation," said Janelle Massiatte, director of Installation Training and Readiness at NSAB.

To initiate the exercise, a role-playing assailant approached the courtyard of the USU campus disguised as a suspicious looking intern armed with an IED. The goal was to have the individual flagged as conspicuous due to the possession of what Massiatte describes as, various "fictitious but alarming items."

When NSAB emergency dispatch was notified to the presence of unusual activity at the location, within a matter of minutes NSF was present on the scene. Base security officers engaged the actor and responded to the event as if he were a real world threat, subduing him quickly and efficiently. Remaining true to their training, after neutralizing the suspect, officers continued to patrol and secure the courtyard in anticipation of other potential risks until the training team leader concluded the event.

"Our hope was that base security would identify that something was not right, even if the person was credentialed to be on base," said Massiatte. "We wanted our forces to remain vigilant not only to external threats but internal threats to our organization. They were told to call it in and [see that the proper precautions were taken]. In this respect we succeeded. However, it was also a great success for our tenants because the event gave us the opportunity to test the communication tactics that we have in place to alert all personnel and tenants aboard the installation."

The Giant Voice speaker system and Everbridge mobile notification system played a prominent role in the drill despite their relatively new introduction to NSAB. First activated October 1, 2013, the Giant Voice notification system broadcasted a message across the base during exercise, notifying base personnel of an active shooter event and the need to activate shelter in place plans. Less than 60 seconds after the voiced message aired, the Everbridge system began alerting base residents and staff electronically. The recently integrated electronic platform automatically sent warning messages to everyone entered into its database, utilizing work telephones, home land landlines, personal cell phones, email, text messages and fax machines.

The notification systems were instrumental in disseminating information not only personnel at USU, but also WRNMMC, Navy Medicine Professional Development Center, Navy Exchange and many others. The warning messages for these platforms then triggered a secondary response to individuals on base which allowed training officers at the tenant commands to evaluate their organization's shelter in place plan.



Photo by Janelle J. Massiatte

Naval security force officers apprehend a suspect in an unsuccessful unauthorized entry due to false credentials Feb. 25.

The significance of practicing shelter in place was twofold at USU; not only did the University host the active shooter exercise on their campus, but the drill was also executed at the conclusion of two weeks of unprecedented preparatory training. The training, made mandatory by USU President, Dr. Charles L. Rice, primed over 3,000 staff, faculty and student personnel at USU to protect themselves in the event of an actual active shooter event.

"Our people took the drill and training sessions extremely seriously," said James Schwartz, the Department of Military and Emergency Medicine deputy at USU, who worked as an evaluator during the active shooter exercise to observe the response by USU faculty staff and students. "They understood what we were doing and why we were doing it."

Within minutes of receiving warnings from both Giant Voice and Everbridge, doors at USU were locked, lights were turned off and electronics were silenced. "You could walk up and down the hallways and they were completely empty," said Schwartz. "It was all buttoned up pretty tight."

At WRNMMC, shelter in place plans, also known as Code White, were carried out with the gravity of an actual threat. Moments after the initial warning, the Command Duty Office initiated internal communications, which echoed the Giant Voice alert using the hospital's internal speakers. Medical staff directed patients to secure areas and maintained an air of silence, which left WRNMMC - from the inpatient wards, outpatient clinics, pharmacies and administrative offices in the Tower - seemingly vacant.

Melissa Knapp, program manager for Emergency Management Plans, Training and Exercises at WRNMMC, explained that patient care was not interrupted. Staff members, especially the hospital ambassadors, commonly known as Blue Coats, ensured everyone was in a safe place and patient needs were met.

"Overall, the staff seemed to be aware of what was going on, and everyone seemed to have a plan in place," Knapp said. "Within the medical center, the exercise was solid and worked well."

While she considers the IED/active shooter training drill successful, Massiatte reminds base staff and residents that it was only one of many training iterations held during the Solid Curtain-Citadel Shield exercise



Photo by Sarah Marshall

A Naval Support Activity Bethesda security officer, first-responder on-scene, prepares to engage with an active shooter located at Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) courtyard Feb. 27. The perpetrator engages the officer with a handgun as well as an armed improvised explosive device attached to a bicycle.

period. "In addition to tactical drills, we conducted four full response drills, executed approximately 15 immediate response drills and effectively responded to regional exercise injections during this short 12-day period. We were able to assess our emergency management responses and communication, test anti-terrorism force protection measures, practice naval security forces strategies and tactics, activate our Auxiliary Support Force, evaluate response times and support methodologies of our Emergency Operations Center. All of these tests were executed successfully with positive results and accolades from the Regional Training Team, all while causing minimal interruption to base operations."

"The Solid Curtain Citadel Shield exercise was a great success," agreed NSAB Commanding Officer, Capt. David A. Bitonti. "We appreciate the cooperation of all the tenant commands, the visitors to the installation and our partners in the community, particularly those that surround the perimeter of our installation."

Responds to Active Shooter Drills



Photo by Sarah Marshall

A squad of Naval Security Force officers patrol the courtyard of the Uniform Services University of the Health Sciences. Even though the active shooter has been neutralized officers must remain vigilant as additional unforeseen hazards and assailants may pose a threat to their safety.



Photo by Janelle J. Massiatte

Security force officers continue with a vehicle search after the driver was apprehended due to an unsuccessful unauthorized entry due to false credentials.



Photo by Janelle J. Massiatte

Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization Support role player, Waheed Sahraie (left), provides pertinent information to law enforcement officer Sgt. Alphonso Moore on a backpack identified as a suspicious package Feb 26.



Photo by Sarah Marshall

Naval Security Force officers subdue the active shooter, tackling him to the ground and binding his hands. While security officers do normally patrol with real guns, the training exercise was performed with props to encourage non-lethal take downs.

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Photo by Sharon Renee Taylor

Red Cross volunteer Greta Patten and her dachshund Shroedie began visits to patients at Walter Reed Bethesda in 2012.

VOLUNTEER

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greatest role he's played in his life is having served his country. "The reason why I'm with the Red Cross here at Walter Reed [Bethesda] is so I can give back," he explained.

Puppy Love

Red Cross volunteer Greta Patten and her dog Shroedie began pet therapy visits to Walter Reed Bethesda in

2012. For three hours, twice a month, Patten rolls the 4-inch-legged, smooth-coat dachshund in a walker-basket among the patients recovering at the medical center — providing a momentary distraction from their challenges, she said.

"It's really his gig," Patten explained referring to the dachshund. "He's the main event — I'm just his driver."

For more information about the Red Cross at Walter Reed Bethesda, call Marin Reynes, senior station manager for the American Red Cross, at 301-295-1538.

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'Forward 54th!'

Stages of Healing Salutes African American History

By Bernard S. Little
WRNMMC Public Affairs
staff writer

Closing out African American History Month and providing a respite for patients, families, staff and visitors at Walter Reed Bethesda, the medical center's Stages of Healing sponsored a performance of Mary Hall Surface's "Forward, 54th!" in the America Building atrium on Feb. 26.

Stages of Healing brings various artists, performances and presentations to Walter Reed Bethesda, "allowing walls to be broken down, facilitating dialogue, and contributing to an overall feeling of togetherness," said U.S. Public Health Service Lt. Cmdr. (Dr.) Micah Sickel, coordinator for the events and a behavioral health psychiatrist at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC).

Last week's performance of "Forward, 54th!" gave those who attended insight into the heroics of the 54th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, one



Photos by Bernard S. Little

Actors portray soldiers from the 54th Massachusetts Voluntary Infantry Regiment in the play "Forward, 54th!" at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center as part of the Stages of Healing presentation on Feb. 26 in the America Building.

of the first official African American units in the United States during the Civil War. Members of the regiment are honored in sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens' bas-relief that forms the Rob-

ert Gould Shaw Memorial. The gallantry of the regiment also served as the basis of the 1989 film "Glory."

Saint-Gaudens' Shaw Memorial, of which there is a plaster cast on exhibit at the National Gallery of Art (NGA) in Washington, D.C., served as an inspiration for author Mary Hall Surface in writing "Forward 54!" The NGA Division of Education presented the 30-minute performance, which features a musician and five actors interweaving monologues with Civil War-era music.

"Theatre can bring history to life in vivid, powerful ways, so I was delighted when the [NGA] asked me to create a play to complement the exhibit," Surface explained. "As a playwright, I always want my plays to inspire people to ask questions, to ponder new ideas and to reach a deeper understanding of themselves and the world through the play."

The play focuses on the experiences of the 54th's 16-year-old drummer Alexander Johnson, as well as Col. Robert Gould Shaw, who led the regiment; Sgt. William H. Carney, a Soldier with the 54th who earned the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Battle of Fort Wagner, where he saved the American flag and planted it on the parapet despite being wounded; and Susie King Taylor, an African-American Union Army nurse, educator, laundress, occasional cook and scout for food supplies.

"I hope people who see 'Forward, 54th!' will not only know more about the history of this remarkable group of men and their supporters, but will understand more deeply the courage required to stand up to the enemy of prejudice," Surface added. "I hope they will feel what it was like to change history; to sacrifice for something larger than themselves. I also hope they will



Mary Miller portrays Susie King Taylor, a Union nurse during the Civil War, in the play "Forward, 54!"

be reminded, in this virtual world of YouTube and video games, that live theatre — real people in a real place and time — is the most powerful way of telling a story and connecting with one another."

According to Sickel, the purpose of Stages of Healing is showing that everyone needs healing; and events are not just for patients. "Certainly, we do want to attract the wounded, ill and injured to our performances, but in order to serve those people better we need to take care of providers and family members. We're all here for the same purpose, to heal, whether it is healing others or healing ourselves. As clinicians, we must heal ourselves in order to heal our patients."

He also explained placing the performances in the hospital makes it a more welcoming environment. "From our surveys, the performances are met with overwhelmingly positive responses from our audiences. They tell us how it benefits them, whether it is an employee who says that it is one of the best perks of working here, or a parent saying that it helps to distract her children on the way to getting their shots. It has a positive effect on people's lives and well-being," Sickel said.

Barbara Grey, a visitor to WRNMMC, said she just happened to be in the America Building lobby during the play, and found the performance "entertaining and educational."

"It speaks of honor, it speaks of perseverance and it speaks of unity," Sickel added.

For more information about Stages of Healing at Walter Reed Bethesda, call Sickel at 301-295-2492.

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